

# Anne bradstreet - paper 2

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



The history of America is recorded in numerous artifacts of culture. One can make judgments about the past from visiting a museum, reading a history textbook or a piece of historical fiction, watching a film, or listening to a teacher. These are all valid resources for learning about history, but one of the most interesting ways is to critically read a piece of literature from a period in order to learn about the people of that time's culture and values. It allows every reader to actively participate as a historian when they evaluate a text. Two of Anne Bradstreet's poems serve as perfect examples of this type of reading for history. The poems " In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet, Who Deceased August, 1665, Being a Year and a Half Old" and " Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666 Copied Out of a Loose Paper" can both be used to investigate a variety of issues about life in the 1600's. The poems can be used to reveal a vast quantity of information from a wide variety of topics. Closely reading Bradstreet's poetry reveals a wealth of information. Reading " In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet, Who Deceased August, 1665, Being a Year and a Half Old" unveils a large amount of information. The title of the poem displays that poetry was considered a serious art form due to the fact that the poem is about a very serious matter and not merely trifles. The title also reveals to the reader an exact year in order to pinpoint the time being studied. The title shows that people of the time had relatively close families because the poem is about a person mourning over a young grandchild. The actual poem shows that the people of the time equate the cycles present in nature to the cycle of human life. This is evidenced in the second stanza, which discusses the rotting of trees at old age, and the death

of young buds. This stanza is meant to be an extended metaphor comparing human existence to the life of plants. The use of such a metaphor in the poem displays that poets in the 1600's were sophisticated in their use of language. The poem illustrates the people of Anne Bradstreet's religious community's view of the role of God in their lives. The line " Is by His hand alone that guides nature and fate." shows that their view of God was one who directly intervenes in human life and guides not only every occurrence in nature, but all happenings in the life of humans. Not only can the examination of the content of the poem be used as a resource, but a study in the form and structure of the poem can be used as well. The poem " In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet, Who Deceased August, 1665, Being a Year and a Half Old" has a very interesting structure. It is a sonnet, and is written in iambic pentameter. It has a solid rhyme scheme of A-B-A-B-C-C-C. The high structure of the poem reveals that poetry in the 1600's was a serious and widely read art form. Such a highly structuralized poem can only come from a poet's numerous readings of other works. Since the writer of this poem was a woman, this structure also reveals that at least some women were extremely educated. Artistic devices were used in works of this time, as well. This is evidenced by the previously mentioned extended metaphor, alliteration in line 5 and repetition of the word farewell in lines 1-3 and the word babe in lines 1 and 2. All of these elements paint a picture of highly stylized writing of poetry in the 1600's, which reveal its function as a very serious art form. " Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666 Copied Out of a Loose Paper" is another great resource for learning about the culture of the 1600's. Once again, the title

immediately reveals the year the work is focusing on. It is similarly a reflection on a personal experience and is very literal and serious in nature. This poem gives strong images of the dominant religious views of the time. The narrator's first reaction to the fire in line 8 is " And to my God my heart did cry/To strengthen me in my distress." This line shows the narrator's viewpoint that God is always present and active in a human's life. Lines 14 and 17 illustrate the Christian belief towards ownership of material possessions. The narrator speaks of how God is the one who " gave and took" in 14 and how her possessions were God's and not hers in line 17. The lines from line 36 to the end of the poem reveal the most about the narrator's faith. The lines are a complete change in tone in the poem, and show how the narrator feels guilty about placing such a high value on her material possessions when her true wealth is in Heaven. This reveals that the dominant religious belief was that life was to be lived in order to gain admittance to Heaven. It shows that happiness on Earth is not as important as happiness in the next life. The last line shows this extremely well, " My hope and treasure lies above." The poem reveals more about the people of the 1600's than just their religious beliefs. The section from lines 30-34 shows a great deal about the daily life of the people. The narrator is reminiscing about the basic life in her house that she enjoyed. This gives a reader a window into what was considered pleasurable during the 1600's. The narrator discusses eating meals, telling stories, sitting in the candlelight, and how their will never be another wedding in that house. This lets a reader know that meals and oral traditions were both held in high esteem in the 1600's and that weddings were enjoyable celebrations. This section on what

the narrator enjoyed in life also reveals an underlying tension between the narrator's religious beliefs and zeal for life. The rapid tone change in the poem in the line " Adieu, Adieu, all's vanity" reveals the narrator's quick remorse for her feelings of longing towards her possessions, which would go against the religious belief that Earthly possessions have no value. The style and form in the poem is highly structuralized similar to " In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet, Who Deceased August, 1665, Being a Year and a Half Old." The poem is written using rhyming couplets in iambic tetrameter. Similar to the earlier poem discussed, Bradstreet confined herself to an extremely rigid structure. She uses many of the same devices in this poem as well. She uses metaphor in line 44 when she refers to God as " that mighty Architect." She also goes back to alliteration in lines 42 and 43 uses words such as " mists" and " may" and " hast," " house," and " high," respectively. The most present artistic device that Bradstreet uses is repetition. This is found in lines 30-34 when she begins the lines by alternating " Nor" and " No." This drives home how much the narrator truly misses her material possessions, and sets up the aforementioned tone change in line 36. Lines 38-40 are repetitious because they are all in the form of questions. This is used in order to illustrate the narrator's questioning of their own belief system. This is important in evaluating the culture of the narrator because it shows how strongly the conflict between religion and daily life is solidified in the narrator's mind. All of these elements of structure and form illustrate the sophistication of poets in the 1600's. They show that poets were extremely well read in poetry of the past and focused their writing using rigid poetic structures. It also illustrates that some women were

well educated because the author of these poems was a woman. Through a close reading of Anne Bradstreet's two poems " In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet, Who Deceased August, 1665, Being a Year and a Half Old" and " Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666 Copied Out of a Loose Paper" a reader can achieve a grasp on the culture of a people from the past. Using examples from content, structure, and form, readers can identify elements of the poetry that reveal an identity of people in the 1600's. Texts such as Anne Bradstreet's poetry are an extremely valuable tool in exploring the cultural and literary history of America.